

LEVEL 1 - 25 OF 72 STORIES

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BODY:

I appreciated Jo Thomas's article about foreign students on the Isle of Youth (''Cuba's School for Exporting Marxism,'' Oct. 4). Cuba's program of junior high schools in the countryside, which combines half days of study and farm work, has been a useful model in many places.

A couple of things might be added to Miss Thomas's account. The restrictions on finances in Cuba do cause great shortages of books, laboratory supplies and living spaces, hence ''no privacy, and ... few personal possessions'' for the foreign students. These and other hardships are perhaps best contrasted with the situation in most poor countries, where almost no children even get into

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secondary schools, where their problems do not arise from the inconvenience of dormitory living, but from illiteracy and hunger.

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